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ABSTRACT

This publication describes key characteristics and statistics on the nation's public universities as they look to the coming century including their role, meeting student needs, maintaining access, obtaining government support, and service the public through outreach and an expanded concept of public service. A section on meeting student needs describes changing student enrollment projections and demographics. A section on maintaining access and opportunity notes that average undergraduate tuition and fee charges have risen faster than inflation rates for at least 10 years. A section on stimulating government resources cites falling appropriation amounts per full time equivalent student between 1980 and 1994 (when inflation is taken into account), and points out that public universities conduct half of all basic research in the nation. A section on serving the nation's needs discusses spending to stimulate lifelong learning among adults, how computer use has changed the work environment, and the economic advantages of college education. Next, an expanded vision of public service is presented that includes increased emphasis on community service in tenure decisions, possible increases in extension-type efforts, and student participation in volunteer or community service groups. A final section briefly describes the National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges. Contains seven charts. (JB)

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FACTS ABOUT PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES

Looking to the Future

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FACTS ABOUT PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES

Looking to the Future

American higher education is a dynamic enterprise. In 1974-75, there were 2,747 U.S. universities and colleges. Twenty years later, that figure had climbed to 3,688, a growth of 34 percent. Higher education is currently a $171 billion industry employing more than 2.5 million people and enrolling over 14 million students.

Higher education enjoys widespread support of the American public. In a 1990 Gallup poll:

- 83 percent believed that, if more people were college educated, the nation's ability to solve social problems such as crime, drugs, and homelessness would improve.
- 88 percent of Americans agreed that providing job training was one of the most important functions of colleges and universities.
- 93 percent of Americans believed that colleges and universities play an important role in conducting research to help solve medical, scientific, social, and other national problems.

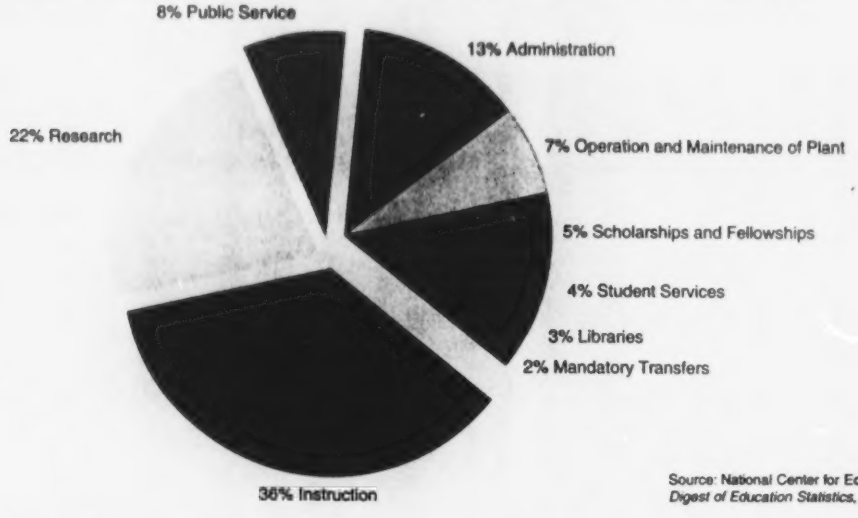
The Role of Public Universities

Public universities play a vital role in fulfilling the higher education needs of the American public. Traditionally, the mission of public universities has been to offer accessible higher education; to conduct research for the nation; and to provide public service to citizens in every state. About two-thirds (66 percent) of the educational and general expenditures of public universities are for these three goals (See Chart 1) How will these institutions evolve to face the challenges that lie ahead in the 21st century? Leaders at public universities will need to devise strategies to:

- **meet the changing needs of the students they serve;**
- **maintain access and opportunity in an era of rising costs;**
- **stimulate the governmental resources needed to support both student aid and research;**
- **serve the needs of citizens through outreach programs and lifelong learning; and**
- **expand the concept of public service.**

The following facts provide background material for those discussions.

Chart 1: Educational and General Expenditures of Public Universities: 1992–93



Source: National Center for Education Statistics, *Digest of Education Statistics, 1995*, p. 350

Meeting the Needs of the Students

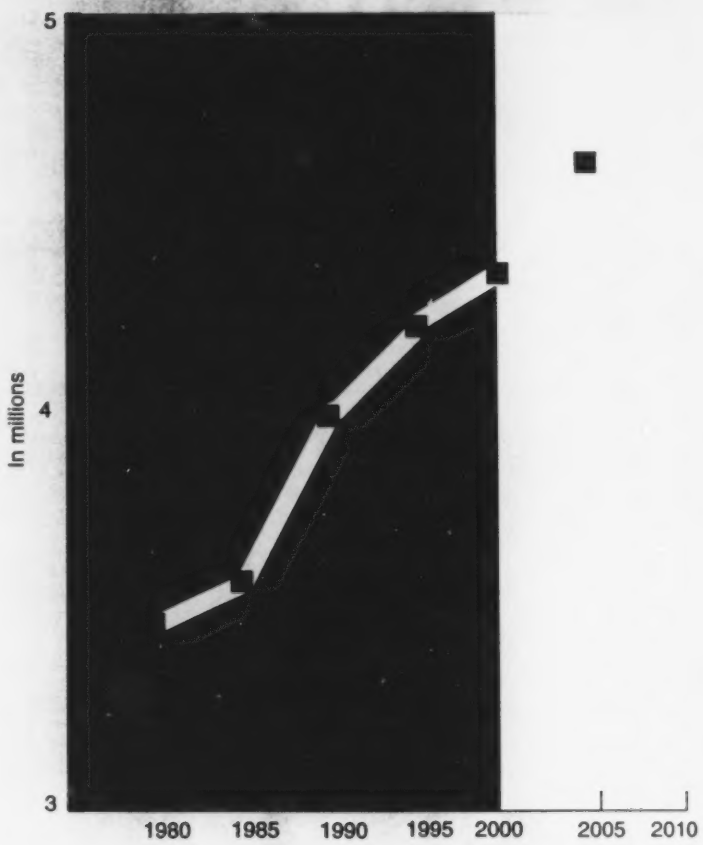
Student Numbers and Characteristics

■ 5,851,760 students were enrolled at public four-year institutions in fall 1993. Of these students, 53 percent were women; 70 percent were enrolled full-time; 21 percent were students of color; and at least one-third (36 percent) were 25 years of age or older. In the recent past, the numbers of women, students of color, and older students have all increased; these trends are likely to continue. For example, between 1976-77 and 1993-94, the numbers of students of color at public four-year institutions have increased as follows: African Americans (non-Hispanic) (30 percent), Hispanic (141 percent), American Indian/Alaskan Native (63 percent), and Asian or Pacific Islander (239 percent).

■ The number of foreign students studying in the United States continues to rise. For example, in 1982-83 there were 195,530 foreign students; by 1994-95 that figure had more than doubled to 452,635. The countries of origin of these students have also changed. In 1982-83 the top five countries of origin were Iran, Taiwan, Nigeria, Venezuela, and Malaysia. Twelve years later in 1994-95, foreign students were most likely to come from Japan, China, Taiwan, the Republic of Korea, and India. Public universities attract many foreign students to study at both the undergraduate and graduate/first-professional levels. Foreign students and their families pay the majority of the costs associated with their education. Three-quarters of foreign students receive their funding from personal and family sources or from their home government or university.

■ The number of recent high school graduates has been lower in the 1990s than it was in the 1970s when the baby boom generation was getting ready for college. Therefore, recent growth in higher education enrollment primarily has been because of the increased participation of older Americans. Between 1970 and 1993, the number of students enrolled who were 35 years or older grew from 823,000 to 2,779,000. In addition, the number of recent high school graduates is increasing once again and should reach 3.0 million by 2005. Both these trends should contribute to sustained enrollment growth for public universities.

Chart 2:
Undergraduate FTE Enrollment at Public Four-Year Institutions and Projections to the Year 2005



Note: FTE is full-time equivalent enrollment. Data for 1994–2005 are projected.
Source: National Center for Education Statistics, *Projections of Education Statistics to 2005*, p. 47.

■ By the year 2005, total enrollment in public four-year institutions is projected to increase to 6.7 million students. Undergraduate enrollment at public four-year institutions also is projected to increase by about 400,000 FTE (full-time equivalent) students and total 4.6 million (See Chart 2). Graduate enrollment is expected to remain more stable, averaging 690,000 - 700,000 FTE students. First-professional enrollment is projected to remain relatively stable or decline slightly from the current level of 119,000 FTE students.

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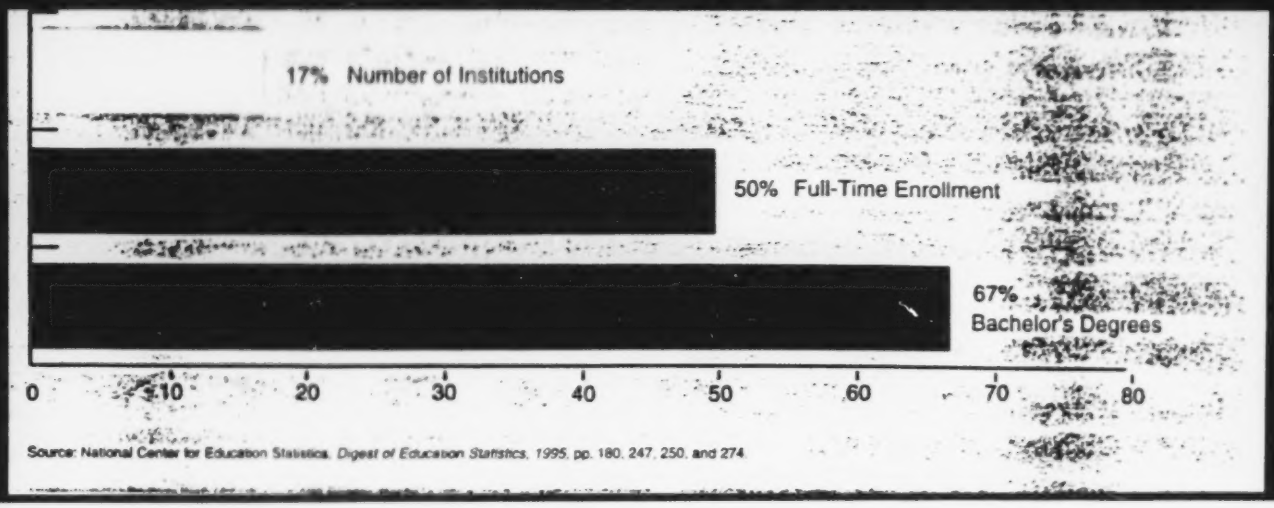
Chart 3: Public Four-Year Institutions' Share of the Higher Education Industry: Fall 1993



Source: National Center for Education Statistics, *Digest of Education Statistics, 1995*, pp. 180, 247, 250, and 274.

Earned Degrees

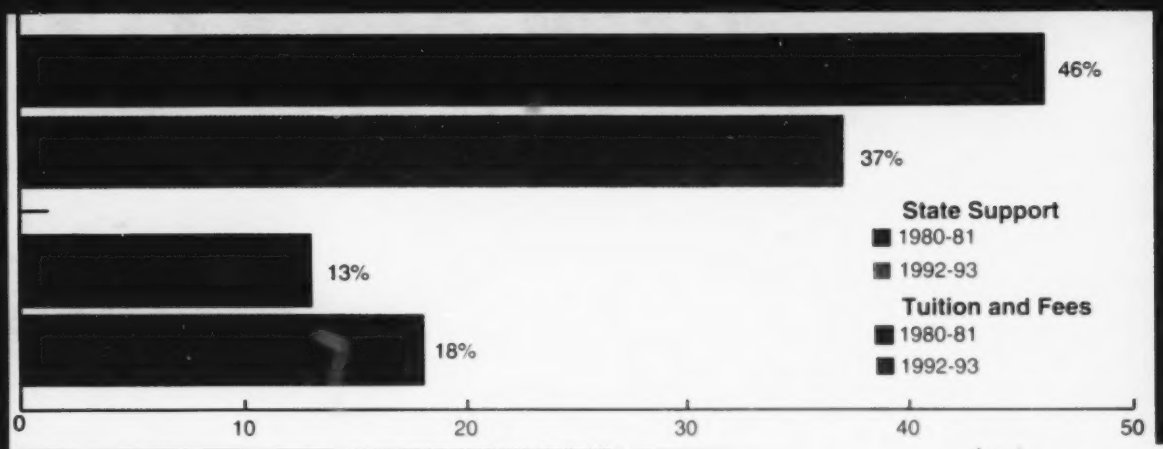
■ Although public four-year institutions comprised only 17 percent of all colleges and universities in 1993-94, they enrolled one-half of all full-time students and produced two-thirds of all bachelor's degrees (See Chart 3). In addition, about three in five students (58 percent) who receive master's degrees and almost two in three (65 percent) who earn doctoral degrees graduate from public four-year institutions.

Maintaining Access and Opportunity

■ Average undergraduate tuition and fee charges have risen faster than inflation rates for at least ten years. Undergraduates attending public four-year institutions in 1995-96 faced average tuition and fee charges of $2,860. It is likely that average increases in these educational expenses will exceed the rate of inflation in the near future. This is largely because state support for public education has declined in constant dollars during this period. Between 1980-81 and 1992-93, the share of total revenues from state expenditures also changed, dropping from 46 percent to 37 percent (See Chart 4). At the same time, revenues from tuition and fees increased as a percent of the budget from 13 percent to 18 percent. Without sustained support from state governments, educators have had no choice but to increase student tuition and fee rates.

■ Reliance on students assistance to pay for college has grown substantially. In 1992-93, 46 percent of undergraduates at public four-year institutions received some form of student aid. The most frequent sources of support were from federal (35 percent),

Chart 4: Change in the Share of Current-Fund Revenues Received by Public Institutions from State Support and Tuition and Fees: 1980-81 and 1992-93



Source: National Center for Education Statistics, *Digest of Education Statistics, 1995*, p. 331.

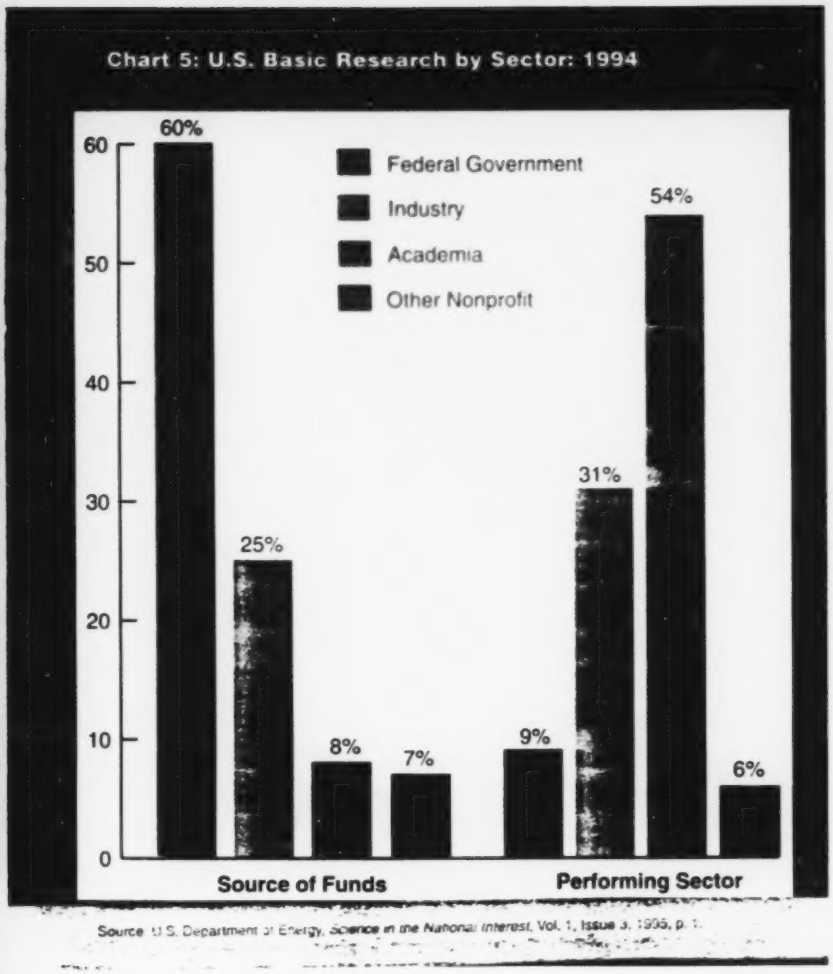
Stimulating the Governmental Resources Needed

state (13 percent) and institutional sources (14 percent). The growth in the amount of debt from student loans has many parents and educators worried. A recent study, "College Debt and The American Family," documented that borrowing for college has grown at a rate three times the growth of college costs and four times the growth of personal income.

■ Many students combine enrollment with employment to help offset college costs. For example, in 1993, 46 percent of all full-time and 84 percent of part-time college students were working while they were enrolled. However, because college costs have risen so rapidly, if a student were to finance a college education exclusively from earnings, a full-time student at an average cost public four-year institution would have to work 44 hours per week at the minimum wage. Ten years ago, the comparable figure was 28 hours.

■ Unlike private institutions that receive on average two-fifths of their current-fund revenues from tuition and fees, public institutions receive less than one-fifth from students. By contrast, public institutions rely more heavily on governmental sources of support. In 1992-93, federal support comprised 11 percent, state payments were 37 percent, and local governments totaled 4 percent of all revenue at public institutions.

■ State support of public institutions increased by 4 percent between FY 94 and FY 95 to reach almost $43 billion. When the effects of inflation are considered, the appropriation amount per FTE student actually has fallen between FY 80 and FY 94. Individual states vary in their willingness and ability to support public higher education institutions based on the public's perception of the value of investment in state colleges and universities, and the relative prosperity of particular state economies. Growth in state funds for



Source: U.S. Department of Energy, *Science in the National Interest*, Vol. 1, Issue 3, 1995, p. 1.

student aid have also varied widely by state. For example, in 1993-94 five states increased aid by more than 17 percent while six states cut aid.

■ About half of all basic research in the U.S. takes place in higher education institutions (See Chart 5). In FY 95, total federal spending for research at universities and related institutions was estimated to be $16 billion. Public universities lead the way in research activities. They spend a larger share of their budgets for research (22 percent) than any other type of higher education institutions. In fact, the National Science Foundation reported that public universities comprised 32 of the top 45 universities in total research and development spending in FY 1993.

Serving the Nation's Needs

■ The public considers expenditures to stimulate lifelong learning among adults to be an appropriate use of their taxes. A recent study by the Washington State University's Social and Economic Sciences Research Center documented that, out of every $100 of public taxes targeted for higher education, the respondents in this national survey would designate $45 to teach students on campus, $30 for off-campus education and technical help, and $25 for research (See Chart 6). Eight in ten respondents said that getting more education is important to their success at work. The potential audience is enormous; in 1991, over 57 million adults participated in some form of lifelong learning programs.

■ The use of computers has dramatically changed the way students and employees perform their duties. The Bureau of the Census reports that the use of computers by college students has increased in only four years, from 1989 to 1993, from about 40 percent to over 50 percent. Likewise, about two-thirds of workers in managerial and professional occupations as well as those in technical, sales, and administrative support positions used computers in their jobs in 1993. This is an example of one area where thousands of students and workers can benefit from instruction offered through both traditional on-campus courses and continuing education classes in the community.

■ A recent college graduate who is having trouble finding a good full-time job may feel that there are far too many employed workers with postsecondary training. Actually, in 1994, only about one in five adults 25 years and older (22 percent) had attained at least a bachelor's degree. Public institutions face the challenge of not only educating students to become better prepared for the labor market, but also to provide retraining opportunities for those workers who can benefit from additional instruction. The economic advantages of education are well documented. Among men, the 1993 median annual income of college graduates who were employed full-time and 25 years or older was $47,740 (See Chart 7). The comparable figure for male high school graduates was $27,370. Among women, the figures were $34,307 for college graduates and $19,963 for those who had completed high school.

Expanding the Concept of Public Service

■ Tenure traditionally has been rewarded based on demonstrated scholarship by university faculty members. Educators are rethinking the tenure system and exploring the possibilities of giving more attention to public service activities at public universities. In a study by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching in the early 1990s, 82 percent of faculty felt that colleagues in their discipline had a professional obligation to apply their knowledge to problems in society.

■ Public service activities comprise 8 percent of all educational and general expenditures at public universities. The range across other types of higher education institutions is only 2-4 percent. Public university employees strive to provide the public with access to information that can improve their daily lives. For example, for more than 75 years, citizens across the United States have benefited from the efforts of the land-grant universities' Cooperative Extension System. In the 21st century, there will be many more areas of service that can be offered through public service initiatives.

■ The concept of public service is not limited to higher education employees. In 1990 26 percent of undergraduates were active in volunteer or community service groups. Participation among students at public universities was higher than the average, with more than two in five (42 percent) students performing volunteer work. Although most students who are active volunteers are involved in community service projects, there is growing interest in "service-learning" programs. The concept of service learning involves integrating volunteerism with some type of college course. For example, students who spend time volunteering at a day-care center might reflect on these experiences in a sociology class discussion.

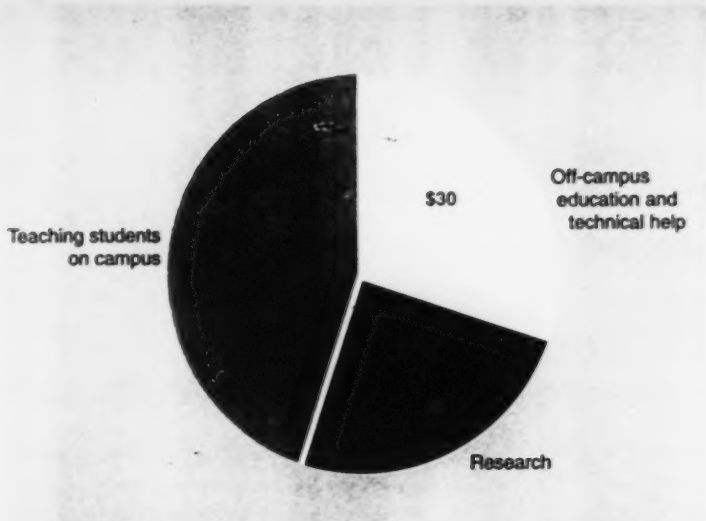
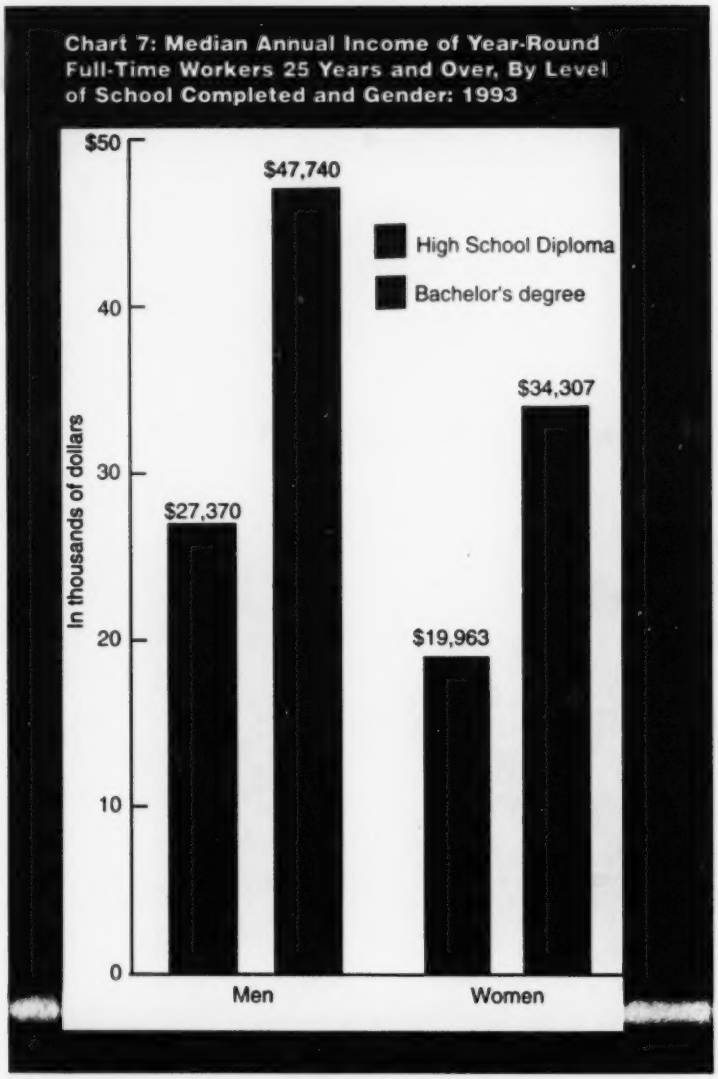


Chart 6: How Taxpayers Would Like to Spend $100 of Public Dollars Targeted for Higher Education: 1995

Source: Washington State University, Social and Economic Sciences Research Center, 1995.



NASULGC Facts

What:
A voluntary, non-profit association of public universities, the nation's land-grant institutions and many state university systems, the National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges (NASULGC) has member campuses in all 50 states, the District of Columbia and the U.S. territories. The association is governed by a chair and board of directors elected from the member colleges, universities and university systems. Its president is C. Peter Magrath, who directs a staff of 35 at its Washington, D.C. offices.

Who:
As of January 1996, the association's membership included 189 institutions, including 74 land-grant institutions of which 17 are the historically black institutions. In addition, 29 tribal colleges became land-grant institutions in 1994. Currently NASULGC campuses enroll more than 2.9 million students and claim upwards of 20 million alumni. Annual charges for full-time undergraduate students average $3,245. Its member campuses award more than a half-million degrees annually, including about one-third of all the bachelor's and master's degrees, 60 percent of all U.S. doctoral degrees, and 70 percent of the nation's engineering degrees.

When:
With roots going back to 1887, NASULGC is the nation's oldest higher education association. In 1963, the American Association of Land-Grant Colleges and State Universities merged with the National Association of State Universities to form the present National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges, or NASULGC (na SUL jick).

Why:
The association's overriding mission is to support high-quality public higher education and its member institutions as they perform their traditional teaching, research, and public service roles. NASULGC provides a forum for the discussion and development of policies affecting higher education and the public interest.

How:
NASULGC aids its members by helping to

- Inform Congress, federal agencies, the news media, the general public and others about the special contributions of public universities;
- Promote a federal legislative program that strengthens public higher education;
- Encourage strong partnerships among public universities and the federal government, state and local governments, business and other segments of the higher education community;
- Develop further university-federal government partnerships in areas of mutual interest;
- Continue to work in support of historically black land-grant institutions coordinated through the Office for the Advancement of Public Black Colleges (OAPBC); and
- Continue to work on behalf of urban universities, supporting efforts that enhance the capacity of these institutions to deal with a wide range of urban problems.

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